

with, and their humane attitude toward this common, recurring and disabling public health problem. In the 16 chapters, each with its own bibliography, the traditional approach to exposition is utilized with a nice balance and weighting of anatomical, pathological and clinical knowledge. This reviewer appreciates the even-handed presentation of unresolved or controversial features and the authors' willingness to commit themselves to a particular view or not depending upon the adequacy of knowledge upon which to base an opinion. The physical forces playing upon the intervertebral discs are helpfully discussed as are the biochemical and pathological changes in evolution of disease. The sections on clinical analysis are sagely presented and well and accurately illustrated, as are the chapters upon management, both conservative and operative.

One might disagree with the authors' eschewing the widespread use of myelography; one could note the lack of reference to the value of gas myelography or other refinements in correlations between functional anatomy and radiological assessment. One might disagree with the favored position accorded laminectomy for thoracic disc herniation or the authors' preference for combined excision-fusion procedures for lumbar herniations. These, however, represent a reviewer's differences from the authors' opinions which surely have been honestly reached by what appears to be a careful, intelligent analysis of their 20 years of focus on the problems of intervertebral disc disease. The sections dealing with the problems of patients having undergone multiple spine procedures are especially insightful and cogent.

This book, while not encyclopedic, is certainly the best of its kind on the market today. It is well produced, easily read, unambiguous and deserves reading by all who treat the various manifestations of disc disease, back and neck pain, et cetera. It is not a neuroscientist's reference, but it is a text worthy of students and generalists and should be mandatory for those who are in neurosurgical and orthopedic training.

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**HEMATOLOGIC PROBLEMS IN SURGERY**—Harold Laufman, M.D., Ph.D., Director, Institute for Surgical Studies; Attending Surgeon, Montefiore Hospital and Medical Center; Professor of Surgery, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New York; and Robert B. Erichson, M.D., Adjunct Attending Physician, Department of Medicine (Hematology), Montefiore Hospital and Medical Center; Hematologist, St. Joseph's Hospital and Hematologist, Laboratory Division, Stamford Hospital, Stamford, Connecticut. W. B. Saunders Company, West Washington Square, Philadelphia, Pa. (19105), 1970. 249 pages, \$10.00.

Although by outward appearances a concise well organized compendium of the hematologic problems faced by surgeons, the contents are sadly disappointing. There is no uniform quality to the book and the sections vary tremendously from pragmatic to irrelevant. The problem of thrombophlebitis and the postphlebotic syndrome is treated in great detail though its hematologic significance remains somewhat clouded. Careful instructions are given right down to the proper wrapping of the leg, step by step, with elastic bandages. On the other hand, in the sections on anemias, references are made to iron, B-12 and folic acid therapy, without mention of doses or treatment regimens. Although a lot of very valuable material is presented in a concise outlined form, the impact is diluted by many seeming errors or poorly explained statements, such as, "When iron is reduced in the body, absorption of iron decreases." A number of points are reiterated which are seemingly redundant to the average surgeon, such as for a patient with a history of bleeding,

adequate amounts of blood should be available for transfusion during the operation to counteract the possibility of operative blood loss.

Many statements will confound or confuse the unwary. Statements such as, "Almost no surgeons employ heparin in the postoperative period following these procedures" when referring to peripheral arterial surgical operations, are simply not justified.

In conclusion, one is forced to say that the book falls far short of its purported goals, though it does provide a neat little handbook if one's demands are not too great.

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**HANDBOOK OF DRUG INTERACTIONS**—Gerald Swidler. Wiley-Interscience—A Division of John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 605 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. (10016), 1971. 384 pages, \$15.00.

The past several years have seen a striking increase in the awareness by physicians of the consequences of drug interactions. This awareness has been expressed in an increasing number of publications devoted to this area of therapeutics. Predictably, compilations of such interactions have begun to appear. The *Handbook of Drug Interactions*, by Gerald Swidler, was prepared because of the author's belief that, "there was a need by the physician and pharmacist for additional help in the safe treatment of patients . . . especially when more than one drug for the patient must be prescribed." One can only concur in that belief. However, I do not feel that the author has satisfied that need with his present effort.

The book suffers from several defects. Perhaps the most important of these is the limited and uncritical use of reference material. It would appear that the primary sources of information are package inserts and other literature provided by the drug manufacturers. These are quoted directly, and without qualification. An equally important defect is the inadequate presentation of the mechanisms of drug interactions. The author claims to have limited discussions of mechanism, since "many of them are so pharmacologically or physiologically complex that I felt I would be doing the reader a disservice by trying to condense this information . . ." In fact, the disservice results as a consequence of misleading conclusions which could be drawn from such incomplete discussions. Since the interactions between drugs are indeed complex, it is especially important that their mechanisms be clearly defined, when known. This definition will allow for the generalization of information to other agents of similar chemical or physical characteristics, and provide the basis for recognition of interactions through understanding rather than rote. Additionally, it is only through the understanding of the mechanisms underlying drug reactions that appropriate corrective measures can be undertaken. Again, the extremely limited use of primary source references makes it difficult for the interested reader to satisfy these deficiencies independently.

Finally, I found the cross-indexing unsatisfying in that most agents were referred to only by trade name. In most circumstances, the generic name of the agent was not provided, nor was there a reference to the class of the agent. The result of this is to further limit the reader's ability to generalize the information provided and allows only for drug-by-drug memorization, an inefficient way to learn.

In all, the present work does not satisfy the needs of the practitioner in an extremely critical area of therapeutics. One must recommend that the physician continue to carefully examine current literature or investigate other collative works which are becoming available.

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